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**Health in the Park Initiative- Inventory and Evaluation of Partner Wellness Policies & Programs**

## **Inventory and Brief Evaluation of Health and Wellness Policies and Programs of Health in the Park Initiative Partners**

### **Park Nicollet-St. Louis Park Clinic**

#### **Wellness Policy and Programs**

Park Nicollet Health Services is a system spread across the Twin Cities Metro with two St. Louis Park (SLP) locations with about 221 employees. Where available, this health and wellness policies and programs inventory is focused on the Park Nicollet-St. Louis Park clinic. Park Nicollet uses national and state professional organizations to help guide them in their preventative health efforts. Specifically, these organizations are the US Preventive Services Task Force and the Institute for Clinical Systems Improvement. Park Nicollet has preventive health programs for both patients and employees.

For patients, Park Nicollet has a website (<http://www.parknicollet.com/healthandwellnessinformation>) that features health and wellness information. It is well-used. There have been 35,018 unique visitors to the Health and Wellness Information pages since Jan. 1. 2013. Major tabs include Advance Care Planning and Healthcare Directives, Flu, Events Mockup, Caring for Kids, Classes and Support Groups. In addition, they publish "Be Well," a tri-annually published newsletter that is mailed to 200,000 patients in the Twin Cities Metro. Every month a different topic is featured. For instance, in September issue focused on back-to-school immunizations. Park Nicollet also uses social media to inform, educate and promote wellness messages. The health provider conducts approximately 100 community outreach events per year, 10 of which are in the St Louis Park vicinity. Activities at each event vary based on the target audience, but may include blood pressure screenings, handouts, giveaways, games related to healthy eating choices. The outreach efforts also may include Park Nicollet system information, information about hypertension, cholesterol finger checks, and the Mammo-a-go-go machine for breast cancer screenings.

For patients, Park Nicollet's comprehensive approach includes the utilization of a medical electronic records system in which they have built registries that group patients into categories based past diagnoses and higher probabilities of future illness. Thus outreach and preventative efforts can be coordinated with patient visits. Whenever a patient is in a certain registry, there are recommended screenings and information given to the patient.

In addition, there is a chronic disease registry of patients to help prevent and manage the care prior, during and between visits of patients with chronic conditions. This is an attempt to catch gaps in



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care and is used in emergency room admittances. There are an estimated St. Louis Park 3,000 patients in the diabetes registry. System-wide there are about 40,000 patients in the hypertension registry. Park Nicollet is currently developing standardized discharge procedures in an attempt to achieve better health outcomes for patients. When appropriate, this includes a one-time visit from a home health care nurse.

Since 2005, Park Nicollet has employed a care consultant to reach out to patients with a high propensity of hospital re-admittance. Less than one percent of system patients receive this intense level of in-clinic and phone interventions. Also, a team of ten care consultants, aided by two social workers, target barriers to care and attempts to manage and adjust the level of care and care procedures when existing care is not successful with the patient. Also, Park Nicollet utilizes medication therapy management pharmacists to meet with patients during the discharge process to ensure that patients understand any changes of prescriptions and levels of dosage. These interactions may also take place over the phone or in-clinic. The health care provider's preventive health efforts include a telemedicine mental health program at the junior high and a drop-in post-partum depression group starting in February, 2014.

Park Nicollet Health Services participates in a unique partnership with St. Mary's Health Clinics to provide medical care without charge to those in need who either lack health care insurance or the personal resources to pay for care. Persons are first screened for eligibility by St. Mary's Health Clinics, and then referred (in St. Louis Park) to Creekside-Park Nicollet for primary care needs. Persons may be referred from primary care to Park Nicollet Specialty Departments and/or Methodist Hospital for additional care if necessary. This is a financial assistance or charitable care program provided by Park Nicollet Health Services; it is not an insurance program. Services available to St. Mary's patients include most primary care, specialty, hospital, and pharmacy services

Since 1996, Park Nicollet-St. Louis Park Clinic has operated a free clinic at the Central Community Center that serves primarily youth from birth to age 18. Twice-weekly, Park Nicollet staffs the space, dedicated for this purpose, with a doctor and two nursing staff to offer preventative care, mainly in the form of immunizations and sports physicals. Any need for acute care is referred to Creekside Clinic. In 2012 this clinic served 736 patients and in 2013 the clinic served over 760 individuals. The clinic coordinates its services with the School District to manage any mental health issues that may arise for junior and high school students. As part of the effort to serve the community, there is an Advisory Board consisting of residents, students, and staff from the St. Louis Park school district, Park Nicollet, the city of St. Louis Park, and the faith and business communities.

Childrens' Dental Services provides low-cost, sliding-scale full service dental care to children to age 21 and pregnant women in the Central Clinic space once a month.

Park Nicollet system employees can utilize an intra-net with webpages devoted to preventive care information and resources. There is an incentive program, Healthy Living Rewards, which provides



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insurance discounts for completing a health assessment and participating in designated activities. The Healthy Living program also sponsors Community Supported Agriculture Farm share programs, fitness club discounts, and on-site farmers’ markets. Massages and stress management resources are available. Bicycle commuting is encouraged.

**Brief Evaluation of Park Nicollet Clinic’s Health and Wellness Programs**

As part of its self-evaluation, the Park Nicollet Clinic system submits its patient wellness information to the Minnesota Community Measurement website (<http://mncm.org/>), where it reports its goals and performance. For the year of 2011, the most recent year in which a report has been issued, Park Nicollet Clinic in St. Louis Park consistently scored higher than state percentages in screenings for breast cancer, cervical cancer, colorectal cancer, and childhood immunizations.

Park Nicollet Clinics also submits treatment evaluation data to MN HealthScores, an organization that provides provider-submitted data on percentage of patients receiving the organization’s established measure of treatment. The Clinic’s goal is to be in the top decile in all of its treatment programs. As the following table demonstrates, the St. Louis Park Clinic is very successful in some departments and has not reached its goal in other departments.

**MN HealthScores Ranking of Park Nicollet- St. Louis Park Clinic, 2013**

Clinic Department	Condition	Success Rating	Comparison to State Average
Internal Medicine	Colorectal Screening	81%	Above average
Family Medicine	Colorectal Screening	71%	Average
OBGYN	Colorectal Screening	53%	Below average
Asthma and Allergy	Asthma	44%	Above average
Family Medicine-Adults	Asthma	34%	Below average
Family Medicine- Children	Asthma	40%	Below average
Internal Medicine	Depression/Remission	10%*	Above average
Internal Medicine	Diabetes	57%	Above average
Family Medicine	Diabetes	53%	Above average
Endocrinology	Diabetes	36%	Below average
Internal Medicine	Vascular Disease	69%	Above average
Family Medicine	Vascular Disease	62%	Above average

\*Average remission rate for all reporting clinics is 6%. Source: <http://www.mnhealthscores.org>



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Also from the MN HealthScores website, in 2012 patients gave the Park Nicollet St. Louis Park clinic above average scores for “Getting care with needed” and “Courteous and helpful office staff.” The Clinic received a below average score for “How well providers communicate.”

In the broader sense, the role of health providers has shifted from when the population’s health was principally compromised by infectious diseases. Since the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, however, individuals have suffered more from chronic diseases. This change has prompted a need for coordination between primary health care providers, the community and public health departments to focus on disease prevention and management, rather than the previous focus on clinical care, to achieve successful community health outcomes. Park Nicollet is to be commended for its efforts to provide a free clinic at the Central Community Center, which provides some level of preventive care for youth biweekly. However, their efforts could be improved by:

- Playing informational videotapes in waiting rooms and offices
- Additional drop-in group visits to provide ongoing information and support
- Using videoconferences and other telehealth applications to enhance treatment alternatives for sufferers of chronic disease; and
- Expanding the service hours and breadth of patient population at the community clinic to offer more preventive health services and education.

**St. Louis Park Public Schools**

**Wellness Policy and Programs**

District Board members adopted a wellness policy in 2006. The policy includes sections on purpose, general statement of policy, and guidelines to promote good nutrition and physical activity. The wellness policy establishes the rationale for the existence of a policy and offers specific guidance on food and beverage service, school food service program and personnel, nutrition education and promotion, physical activity and communication with parents. The District’s wellness policy also includes provisions for implementation and monitoring, requiring an annual report to the superintendent from the food service program administrator.

Regarding physical activity, in response to an annual questionnaire, school principals consistently report that all students in their buildings receive the curriculum level of minutes of physical education required by the curriculum committee, which follows state of Minnesota standards. A majority of students participate in competitive sports. In order to promote physical activity, as well as achieve other benefits, there have been school site assessments completed with technical assistance from Hennepin County Safe Routes to School funding at Peter Hobart, Aquila, Susan Lindgren, and Park Spanish Immersion elementary schools. Also, the District developed an Active Living curriculum that is offered regularly.



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**Brief Evaluation of SLP School District Wellness Policy and Programs**

Effective 2006, federal law required every school district participating in federally funded school meals programs, which includes St. Louis Park schools and nearly every district in the country, to establish a local wellness policy. Minimum standards for the wellness policies required districts to establish goals for nutrition education, physical activity, in-school food provision, and other school-based activities designed to promote student wellness; and to create a plan to measure the implementation of the wellness policy.

The school district's wellness policy follows the mandates of the federal law to provide food that meets USDA nutritional guidelines, provide nutrition education, and creates a plan to monitor and report on progress. The District has a farm-to-school program that provides fresh fruits and vegetables in schools and offers education that emphasizes the connection between food, nutrition and farming. Kathleen Milbrath, Nutrition Services Supervisor, reports that the District has "implemented all of the required USDA changes up to this year and we are in the on-going process of implementing the changes that are required moving forward."

Currently, the School District's policies are focused upon students, with little attention toward the approximately 650 District employees to promote physical activity and healthy behaviors. Although the priority should be on student health, the District has a responsibility to focus on staff student parent wellness as well. As with any organization, advances in employee wellness extend beyond the direct impacts of personal health. Districts with school employee wellness programs have also found that a focus on health promotion attracts new employees and earns the loyalty of current employees. Moreover, school employees interested in their own health are more likely to take an interest in the health of their students; students, in turn, are more likely to engage in health-promoting activities when school employees model such behaviors.

Through the Community Education department the District offers enrichment classes, many of which focus on physical activity and healthy behaviors. The class roster for spring 2014 includes classes for body movement, body conditioning, yoga, nutrition education, edible gardening, aquatic fitness, many varieties of dance, and a multitude of fitness and recreational activities for all ages and abilities. The District also opens up some school recreational facilities to community use during non-school hours.

Here is a brief list of actions that St. Louis Park Schools could undertake to improve employee and student health:



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- Name or hire a Health Coordinator who champions for and monitors the effectiveness of the wellness policy for both students and District employees. The Health Coordinator should have the resources and the support of the School Board to implement wellness policies and empowered to be flexible in response to circumstances
- Establish a School Wellness Policy Task Force consisting of teachers, staff, and administrators to identify barriers to implementing wellness policies and recommend how to reduce those barriers
- Ensure that regular reporting on the wellness policy occurs at Board meetings
- Establish goals for influenza immunization rates and promote annual immunizations for both students and employees
- Further promote community access to school recreational facilities during non-school hours; and
- Provide guidance on how parents can reinforce at home the messages regarding healthy behaviors and good nutrition that students learn in school.

In addition, the employee wellness program should contain the recommended elements of the City employee wellness plan outlined in the evaluation of the City of St. Louis Park's employee wellness program. An excellent document that can offer guidance to establishing and developing a school employee wellness program can be found on the Directors of Health Promotion and Education website here:

[http://dhpe.site-ym.com/members/group\\_content\\_view.asp?group=87568&id=124831](http://dhpe.site-ym.com/members/group_content_view.asp?group=87568&id=124831)

## **The City of St. Louis Park**

### **Wellness Policy and Programs**

The City addresses wellness in both internal (public employees) and external (SLP residents and visitors) realms. The internal clients are City employees, which the Wellness Incentive program targets. The external wellness clients are city residents and visitors who live, work and play in St. Louis Park. The City's main contributions to community health to the external clients are relevant city policies and the public physical infrastructure that promotes physical activity and healthy behaviors. This physical infrastructure, among other things, includes parks, walkable neighborhoods, and bicycling facilities.



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*Wellness Program for City Employees*

Recognizing that organizations with healthy staff often report higher morale and productivity, and lower absenteeism and health costs the City of St. Louis Park established a Wellness Incentive in 2011. Each year, the requirements for receiving the incentive have become more difficult, and the incentive payment has increased. The 2013 Wellness Incentive requirements included:

- Health Risk Assessment
- Non-Tobacco User or participation in cessation program
- HealthPartners outreach program (online or telephonic health coaching)

In addition, the program required 3 of 4 of the following activities:

- Biometric Screen
- Flu Shot
- Preventive Medical Exam
- Preventive Dental Exam

The City's stated intention with the Wellness Program is "aimed at employee health and wellbeing, in an effort to proactively eliminate diseases related to lifestyle factors (obesity, heart disease, diabetes, knee/back pain, etc.) before they manifest themselves as costly claims. The City's long term goal is to continue and improve upon the program to achieve results that align employee behaviors to desired healthy outcomes."

The City uses myHealthCheck, a vendor committed to providing outcomes-based wellness solutions. In contrast to previous years, Employees no longer self-report their wellness activities. A health advisor will guide them through every step of the assessment which includes bio screen data, body fat percentage, and health risk assessment data. From these data the health advisor calculates a single health score. The health advisor then works with each employee to provide recommendations for improvement in all areas, along with dozens of programs in which to engage. myHealthCheck will provide employees a very clear graphical picture of their current state of health and focus them on the specific risk areas that need improvement.

The City reports that 68% of eligible employees have completed the parameters of the program and will receive the incentive in 2014. This is a slight decrease from the previous year when 72% of City employees received the incentive.

*Wellness Policy/Programs for City Residents and Visitors*

Long active in promoting healthy behaviors and active living, St. Louis Park has completed extensive work in the public realm to promote daily physical activity and healthy foods. The City participates in the Minnesota GreenStep Cities program, which assists in facilitating technical assistance for the



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implementation of sustainable development best practices for municipal governments. Many of the actions that the City's has reported to this organization relate to improving community health. For instance, in order to increase access to transit and the attractiveness of transit ridership, the City convened a community planning/design process for a mixed use zoning district adjacent to the proposed alignment of the Southwest Light Rail Transit.

The City has modified its parking requirements to create incentives for property owners to construct fewer surface parking lots, which provides benefits for walkers and bicyclists. Multi-family developments within ¼ mile of a transit stop are eligible to reduce the required number of parking spaces. Minimum parking requirements are reduced on a "one-for-one basis" if adequate on-street parking is nearby. The development of a travel demand management plan may reduce parking spaces by five percent. If parking in a development is structured or located underground, the City grants density bonuses to the development. The City also permits shared parking facilities between different properties and encourages parking located on the side or rear of lots in order to make a more inviting pedestrian environment. Multi-family units are required to have one bicycle parking spot per dwelling unit. With commercial, office or industrial development, bicycle parking spaces must equal ten percent of the automobile parking requirement.

St. Louis Park has 25 parks containing over 790 acres of recreational opportunities. Proximity to a park is nearly universal: 90 percent of planned residential uses are within 400 meters of a park. There are two regional trails, a creek canoeing program, three lakes stocked with fish by the Department of Natural Resources, and the annual Parktacular event, which showcases recreational opportunities, occurs over a three-day period every June. Furthermore, the City is deliberating whether to build a new recreation center which would greatly expand indoor recreational opportunities and capacity. The project is still in concept design phase but could include such amenities as a gymnasium, a lap pool, a leisure pool, a community room, a gathering place with a coffee shop or cafe, a drop-in child care center, a play area for kids, a track, three fitness rooms and party rooms.

The City created a Trails and Sidewalks Master Plan in 1999 to identify existing and potential activity nodes, transit stops, regional links, and natural resource destinations. It also identified physical impediments and hazards, and set priorities for building and improving crossings, sidewalks, trails and bikeways. Through the Plan's guidance, St. Louis Park has added:

- More than seven miles of new sidewalks
- Two and one half miles of new trails
- New regional trail connections to provide neighborhood access to the regional system
- Intersection crossing safety improvements such as countdown timers and enhanced signage throughout the City
- A pedestrian bridge over CR 25 that links Carpenter Park and City Hall with the Cedar Lake regional Trail and Beltline Boulevard; and





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- Over 1,100 bicycle parking spaces have been installed by public and private entities.

In 2007 the City adopted an Active Living Sidewalk and Trails plan that envisioned a non-motorized circulation network with bikeways at ½ mile intervals and all residents within a ¼ mile of a sidewalk or trail. The ten year (2013-2023) Capital Improvement Plan approved the outlay of over \$4.8 million in estimated construction costs to create about 15 miles of new sidewalks, about 30 miles of bikeways and bike lanes and three miles of trails.

The City has been active in promoting community gardens, which increase access to healthy foods. The City assisted in the development of six community gardens by installing access to water for plant irrigation. The City continues to support the gardens by managing waste collection and providing technical assistance, compost and wood chips. In addition, the City encourages growers to donate excess produce to St. Louis Park Emergency Program (STEP), a nonprofit organization that provides food, clothing, shelter, and transportation to needy residents. The City piloted one “edible playground project in 2013 and will construct a total of five playgrounds that foster learning about healthy foods at summer child care locations.

The City has also experimented with a healthy foods vending machine policy. The change in food selection has revealed that the rate of consumption determines the types of fresh foods available in machines. If the machine is not in a highly visible and frequented area, the vending machine food requires a longer shelf life. The City has attempted to ameliorate this situation, for example, by locating the City Hall vending machines, previously in public employee-access only areas, in areas with general public access. There are no “energy” drinks available and container size is limited to 16 ounces or smaller.

In 2011 the City collaborated with the Minnesota Department of Health to conduct a Health Impact Assessment (HIA) on the City’s adopted Comprehensive Plan. The assessment included an examination to determine if the Comprehensive Plan supported a list of twenty healthy indicators that spur physical activity and reduce environmental conditions that can have an adverse effect on public health. The health indicators included such factors as proximity to parks and trails, adequate lighting for pedestrian ways, presence of affordable housing, lead exposure, and environmental quality issues such as vegetated buffers along water bodies.

In May 2013 the City adopted a Healthy Eating and Active Living Policy that declared the City would “seek opportunities and establish mechanisms to support individual, community, and environmental efforts to improve the public’s health by encouraging the development and implementation of policies and practices that support and promote healthy eating and active living among citizens of the City of St. Louis Park.” The resolution passed by City Council set forth guiding principles and policy statements in the areas of the Built Environment, Natural



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Environment, Services and Programs, Promotion and Partnerships, Employee Wellness, and Healthy Food Access.

In June 2013 the City Council passed a complete streets policy. Complete streets are designed, constructed, and maintained to assure safety and accessibility to all users– vehicular and non-vehicular– and recognize that context and transportation needs vary throughout the community.

In order to improve the quality of the environment in the St. Louis Park, the City has undertaken several initiatives. The City conducted a natural resource inventory as a tool to support prudent natural resource decisions. The City has a tree preservation and landscape ordinance to preserve tree canopy and increase resident exposure to the mental-calming effects of greenery. The City is a Tree City USA and has planted over 300 trees annually for the last five years. City has been adding alternative landscaping around pond/lake perimeters and has added prairie in park open spaces. City manages the sites with integrated pest management techniques.

**Brief Evaluation of SLP’s Wellness Policy and Programs**

Through the zoning ordinance and development standards city government shapes and guides the development and redevelopment of the physical environment. A brief examination of the City’s zoning code reveals that it contains some elements that support physical activity. There are travel demand management plans required for higher density development in the I-394 corridor, with accommodations for bicycling and public transit specified as suitable means to meet transportation needs. There is a mixed-use development zoning district that encourages development that could create comfortable walking environments. There is a neighborhood commercial zoning district that could create destinations in neighborhoods that residents could walk to in order to meet daily goods and service needs. However, there are few mixed use zoning districts within the city to encourage the development of new walkable areas. Also, there is a requirement that neighborhood commercial districts are located on arterial or collector roads, which restrict their presence to areas that are on the edges of neighborhoods and are often more oriented to vehicular, rather than pedestrian and bicycle, access. The zoning ordinance does provide the right development guidance and incentives on parking, which often improves the pedestrian environment.

The City is to be commended for its broad range of actions that spur physical activity and raise resident’s awareness of health. The overwhelming majority of residents have access to parks. To improve the bicycling and walking infrastructure the City has dedicated resources since 1999 and plans for additional investments through 2023. The City has conducted a Health Impact Assessment on the current Comprehensive Plan. The HIA includes a summary of recommendations divided into three sections: Physical Activity and Access to Healthy Foods, Personal Health and Safety, and



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Neighborhood/Community Health. The recommendations are not extensive and the assessment confirms that SLP's Comprehensive Plan is a contributor to improving community health.

The City adopted a Complete Streets policy. The City promotes access to fresh foods through its support of community gardens and fresh produce for STEP, but there is a waiting list for garden plots. The City could consider expanding the program and adopting revisions to its zoning code that would encourage urban agriculture. The City has attempted to improve the selection of healthy foods in vending machines and further options should be explored to improve this program.

The City's Wellness Incentive program for employees provides gains in personal health, raises employee awareness of risk behaviors and offers some data for areas where employees can improve their health. However, the program doesn't utilize a comprehensive approach to change the organizational culture around physical activity and healthy behaviors.

A broader approach for employee wellness could include:

- Scheduled brown bag lunches featuring presentations on relevant health and wellness topics
- Employee awards for physical activity and healthy behaviors
- Subsidized access to a recreation center and meditation classes
- A viable healthy foods policy for meetings and vending machines on City property
- Avoid bottled or canned beverages when healthy options are available in bulk (e.g. pitchers of water rather than individual bottles)
- A "no dumping" policy that discourages employees from bringing foods and beverages of limited nutritional value to the office for group consumption.
- Physical activity breaks during working hours
- Nutrition education and counseling
- Lifestyle management programs for coaching on stress, weight, and tobacco use
- Chronic condition coaching
- Based on claims and predictive modeling health advisor outreach to employees for health-promotion interventions.
- Prenatal coaching program for expectant mothers
- Established program goals and regular evaluation of program effectiveness

The Healthy Eating and Active Living Policy adopted in May 2013 is comprehensive and contains clear guidance for promoting healthy transportation and lifestyle choices, but it does not offer goals, nor does it establish a framework for future evaluation of the Policy's effectiveness or impact. Some metrics that other municipalities have used include percentage of incidence of chronic disease, change in health care costs, and change in percentage of individuals who are overweight or obese.